

FAMOUS FOR STORIES OF MORCOVE SCHOOL!

The SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN 2^d



**"Polly—I've Got
Sad News For You!"**

(A tense moment in the
great long complete
story of Morcove School
within.)

Her Brother—or Her School? Which Shall Polly Linton Choose?

Polly Linton's Double Problem!



Usually one of the first to take part in any fun the Form may have on foot, Polly Linton is puzzling the Fourth by not participating whole-heartedly in its latest venture. But how can the madcap put her heart into a play when she is worried beyond endurance by her brother's threatened expulsion from his school and his chum who is seriously ill?

Facing the Form!

THE Fourth Form class-room at Morcove School was filled up for a meeting.

Some of the girls had turned up quite ten minutes before the appointed time, and much noisy playing about there had been. The black-board-easel was only now being set on its legs again, after being crashed over, amidst great hilarity, at the start of all the fun.

By twos and threes, those juniors who had waited for six o'clock to strike came in. Etta Hargrove, Ella Elgood, and Eva Merrick—the Three E's, as they were called—now sauntered in. Came also Elsie Ashby, in company with Madge Minden and Tess Trelawney. Came good-looking Cora Grandways, with her "Here I am!" air, together with her sister Judith.

Pam Willoughby's graceful step brought her upon the lively scene. Next came Diana Forbes, looking as if she were nobody's friend in particular. With so many girls now in their places, some impatient cries began to go up:

"Where's Study, 12?"
"Where's the captain?"
"Here's the cap.!" was

Cora Grandways' deceiving shout as she saw mean-spirited Ursula Wade on the point of entering. "All stand!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I should have said the future cap.," apologised Cora, and there were further shrieks of laughter, causing Ursula to glare angrily.

"Six o'clock!" dinned several of the impatient ones. "What does Study 12 mean by it?"

But the sudden appearance of Betty Barton, Form captain, only a few seconds behind time after all, was the signal for great cheering.

"Hurrah, the cap.! Bet-ty!"

Not that this ovation for the captain was quite unmarred by hostile cries, although these were directed against one girl out of several who had come in with Betty Barton.

"Boo!" Polly Linton was greeted, not altogether in fun. "You don't mean to say you are here, Polly?"

"Haven't you an appointment with your brother, Polly?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Order!" requested Betty, slapping the Form-mistress' desk at which she would have to stand, being in the "chair" by right of office.

By
MARJORIE STANTON

But the meeting had yet to treat Paula Creel and Naomer Nakara to a few facetious remarks.

"Go back and do your hair, Paula! Oh, you untidy girl!"

This, of course, was an allusion to amiable Paula's spick-and-span appearance. Naomer, having come in chewing an apple, was asked:

"Got one for me, Naomer? Ugh, greedy!"

Naomer took a last bite at the apple and then whizzed the core at the best human target. It happened to be Cora Grandways who had caught the dusky one's eye, and the apple-core might have caught Cora, only she ducked. Ursula Wade, suddenly smitten on the ear by the missile, hissed savagely. Whereupon the meeting pealed with laughter.

Thump! Betty smote the mistress' desk for order.

"Girls—"

"Hooray! Yes, Betty, what about it?"

"Well, then—order! If you'll all sit down," Betty Barton suggested, with that good humour which made her such an admirable captain. "Naomer, sit down!"

The meeting stood up again to tell Naomer to obey the captain.

"Sit down, Naomer!"

"What ze diggings! I am sitting down, aren't I?" cried Naomer, now that she had violently crashed down, thereby shooting her desk-mate on to the floor.

Paula was the luckless desk-mate, and it has to be recorded that she met with no sympathy at all. Rather the reverse!

"Wow! Owp—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shame!" laughed the meeting.

"Insufferable treatment!" protested Paula, being "helped" up at last. "Is it funny?"

The others seemed to think it was.

"Fwivolous cweatures, the lot of you! Naomer, pway be weasonable! Please move up so—"

"Oh, have all ze jolly room!" cried Naomer, kneeling on the desk itself, so as to leave Paula with all the seat. "Ooo, gorjus now I have ze grand-stand, so, queek, get ze jerk on, Betty!"

There was great tact in Betty's joining in the final laughter, which ended in a more or less orderly silence.

"Well, girls," she began seriously at last, "you all know why this meeting has been called. When there's trouble in the Form, it is no use leaving it to be talked about by this group and that, making a lot of gossip."

"Hear, hear-r-r!"

"So I thought it best that we should have this meeting this evening, and get down to brass tacks."

Loud cheers!

"The question before the meeting is: are we going on with the play or not? If we are, then—I am saying, girls, if we are—"

"If!" yelled Cora.

"Order! H'ssh!"

"Girls," said Betty, and there was silence again. "Personally, I shall be awfully sorry if we drop it—"

"Who wants to drop it?" called out two or three, evoking the answering shout:

"Polly does! Boo! After all the trouble we've taken! Ugh, you, Polly!"

"I am going to ask Polly to speak in a minute," Betty announced appeasingly. "Fair play, girls!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Yes, bekas—"

"Get down, Naomer!"

Thump! from the "chair."

"Order!" cried Betty. "If I may just put the present trouble in a nutshell, girls? Polly wrote the play, 'Merrie Moreove!' We found that it was a thumping good play, and we made up our minds to produce it, didn't we? We were all keen—nobody more so than Polly herself!"

"At the start!" said a malcontent.

Betty nodded.

"I expected that! Well, now, what's the reason Polly once or twice has let us down lately? She is here, and can speak for herself. She'll tell you, I'm sure, just why she has put us in a muddle at times by failing to show up at rehearsals, and all that."

"She needn't!" called out Diana Forbes. "We know quite well why it is."

"She wants to see her brother!" said half-a-dozen juniors in chorus. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't wait, Polly, if you want to be off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Polly Linton jumped up, fierce-eyed and cheeks aflame. At first, the meeting thought she was going to stand out to make a speech; then she was seen to be marching to the door.

"Hooray!" cheered some, whilst others gave counter-cries, resulting in sheer uproar. But there was immediate silence when Betty ran to lay a detaining hand upon Polly's shoulders.

"I must warn the Form," said Betty gravely, "the thing has to be settled one way or the other this evening. I call upon Polly to speak. Give her a chance, girls!"

This time there was some genuine cheering, affording angry-looking Polly a few moments in which to steady her breathing now that she had consented to stay. Slowly the crowded room became quite silent.

"I know I have let you all down badly more than once," Polly spoke tensely. "All I can say about that is it couldn't be helped. Things cropped up, and I—I had to see to them. If I could go into details, I would; but I can't."

"Will it happen again?" inquired Etta Hargrove as a well-meaning attempt to reach a satisfactory understanding.

"I don't know! I can make no promise. But there is this about it," spoke on Polly spiritedly. "The play's written, and I've done all the necessary revisions, and so on. Why not do without me now?"

A dissenting chorus arose:

"We can't. You know we can't, Polly! What about your own part in it?"

"Yes, bekas all ze funny bits—"

"Order!"

"What ze diggings! I suppose I can spik?" protested Naomer, standing high upon her desk.

"If I want to spik, I shall spik! Bekas—"

She got no further, being grasped about the knees by an athletic junior and lifted down, to be dumped upon the floor.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Then Diana Forbes stood up.

"I should like to ask Polly Linton: what about the offence given to Lady Lundy a few evenings ago?"

"Hear, hear-r-r!"

"When Lady Lundy came to the school on purpose to see how the play was shaping in rehearsal," Diana continued, "and we could not rehearse after all, thanks to Polly's dodging off!"

"Yes, Polly," chimed several.

"Oh, I know," said Polly. "And I was awfully sorry, but—"

"Fine lot of use being sorry!" sneered Ursula Wade.

"On a point of ordah!" beamed Paula, standing up. "Is it wight for geals who weally have no part in the projected play to express their opinions?"

Commotion!

"I didn't want to appear too strict," said Betty. "But I must now remind Ursula Wade she has yet to pay her sub.!"

Great cheering!

"Anuzzer thing, on ze point of ordaire——"

"Sit down, Naomer!"

"No, bekas, if Paula can spik, so can I!"

"Put her out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The captain rapped for order.

"Any more of it, girls, and I'll dissolve the meeting, and that will be the end of everything as regards the play. But, look here! We don't want it to be a fizzle-out. Just think what the Fifth Form will say! Let Polly say that she is really as keen as ever, and then—well, we'll manage!"

Great cheering again. That "we'll manage" of Betty's was a phrase for which she was famous.

She turned to Polly.

"You are as keen as ever, Polly?"

"Of course I'm as keen as ever," Polly said. "How can any of you suppose for a moment that I don't want the play to be acted? After all, I wrote it. I'm willing to do all I can——"

"Good enough," broke in Betty, and there was some clapping. "Well, then, girls, here it is! We don't want to hang about all night——"

"No, bekas, refreshm——"

"Order!"

"What Naomer meant to say, I'm sure, was prep.!" jested Betty, causing a great burst of laughter. "But now, girls, I propose a vote of confidence in Polly Linton."

"May I second that, geals, with the gweatest of pleasure?" Paula bobbed up to say. "Unaccustomed as I am to public sp——"

"Sit down!"

"Yes, bekas I second it! What ze diggings! I thir'd it, any-old-how! So carry him, uni-nammy-ninny-lessly, queek!" shrieked Naomer.

But the hands were going up all over the room. The girls who kept their hands down were not worth counting. Betty, all smiles, promptly said "Carried!" and there was great applause.

"And as regards the offence given to Lady Lundy," the captain resumed presently, "that must be dealt with. Apart from the fact that we want her to loan the hall of Barncombe Castle for a matinée in aid of charity, we can't allow such a sport as Lady Lundy is to go on being offended. If the meeting is agreeable, I'll see what I can do."

"Isn't it up to Polly?" grinned Cora. "She offended Lady Lundy—the Form didn't!"

Then Betty fired up.

"If the Form wants to take it out of Polly to the last ounce, then I'm through!" she cried, with one of her rare flashes of anger. "Does the Form insist that Polly must settle with Lady Lundy, or will it leave it to me, the captain?"

"You, Betty!" was the response by a big majority.

"Right, then!"

It was an end to all the ill-feeling against Polly that had been in the air these last few days. On a suggestion by Betty that they might as well stay on for a bit, usefully discussing various matters connected with the play, there was fresh



"I must write to Lady Lundy," Polly said stoutly. "She knows it was I who offended her, and it is from me that the apology is due. I can't let you do it for me, Betty, thanks all the same!"

cheering. Some of it was for Polly, as she returned to her seat.

Harmony reigned again, and when at last the meeting broke up, some of the juniors had to give a few mischievous runaway knocks at the doors of Fifth Form studies, they felt so full of beans!

Polly—Apologising!

"EXTREMELY gwatifying!" was Paula's beaming comment on the outcome of the meeting as she floated into Study 12, to occupy the best armchair.

"Yes, bekas— Good job!" rejoiced Naomer, dancing around. "We are going to do 'Merry Morocco,' after all. Opening chorus, everybody," she requested, seizing a ruler with which to beat time. "Oh——"

"We are ze girls of Morcove School,
Of Morcove, merry Morcove!"

"H'rrp!" said Polly, taking the ruler away from the imp. "And don't forget—you haven't done any prep. yet!"

Naomer made a swooning collapse into her chair at the study-table. With an air of martyrdom she got her books out, and at the same time Paula sighingly heaved up from the armchair to come to the table and work.

It was a quiet settling-down; that meant Study 12 was not in its normal mood even now. Why? Simply that Polly was not quite her mad-cap self, although she certainly did seem to Betty to be feeling better after that meeting. Not quite so grumpy!

For the best part of an hour the captain and her three co-tenants of Study 12 kept at their lessons. Then Naomer, telling Paula to put her books away for her, went away with a jug for boiling water. Naomer's latest fancy was for a cup of cocoa "last thing" every evening. Paula, her own "prep." finished, resorted to the best armchair again, with sighs of "pwofound relief."

"Betty," said Polly, laying down her pen.

"Yes, dear?"

"I shall tackle Lady Lundy."

"Oh, but—"

"It was awfully good of you to offer, but you heard what Cora said at the meeting? It's up to me."

"Who cares what Cora says, Polly? No, you leave it to—"

"I shall not," refused Polly flatly. "It wouldn't be fair. I don't suppose I can get to see Lady Lundy, so I must write. She knows that it was all my doing, and it's from me that an apology is due."

"Still, dear— Oh, all right!" Betty gave in blithely, for she did not want an argument. It would only reopen wounds that were healing.

"I'll knock off a letter now; best to get it done, although it's too late for to-night's post," remarked Polly, laying a sheet of notepaper on her pad. "There's heaps to do to-morrow."

"You've your hands full, and no mistake, Polly," said Betty. "But I can't help feeling awfully glad that we are going on with the play, although, what with one thing and another, you must find it a strain. Er—I didn't remind the meeting that Dave Lawder is so ill, at Grangemoor School."

"I'm glad you didn't," responded Polly tersely. "Dave's illness hasn't been the cause of my letting down the Form. I'm terribly sorry about Dave; but, then, so are they all."

"He's a little better now, anyhow, according to the last news we had over the 'phone," exclaimed Betty thankfully.

Polly nodded.

"Yes, that's a jolly good job. It's because of my brother that I've rather played the girls about; as they know. If I could have explained— But I must tackle this letter," she broke off, dipping her pen in the ink.

Naomer, coming in presently with a steaming jug, received a warning look from the captain to make not a sound. Whereupon Naomer, having worked her eyebrows up and down interrogatively and received more warning signs in answer, tiptoed round to the corner cupboard. Opening it without a sound, Naomer started to try to make cups of cocoa in a stealthy manner. A spoon clinked presently.

"H'rrp!" growled Polly, chewing the top of her penholder

"Oh, dash!" she suddenly flared out, although there was dead silence.

Hitching back her chair, she jumped up, took the half-written letter from the pad and marched away with it.

In the otherwise deserted library, half an hour later, Polly finished writing a letter. She read it through—then tore it up.

All wrong! Oh, it was a fooling business trying to write a lengthy letter in the third person. She could only make it sound a stupid rignmarole, and, anyhow, what was the use of only half explaining? If that sort of thing had done no good where the Form was concerned, it certainly would do no good with Lady Lundy.

Polly sat at the library table, as glum as could be. She had perfect quiet around her here in the library. She had written "Merry Morcove"—the whole of it—under the most trying conditions, and had written it easily! But what to write to Lady Lundy now—

"Oh, dash!" she sighed, shuffling her feet.

But because she was the girl she was, Polly would not consider leaving it to Betty, after all. No. Those who made trouble must be the ones to clear it up. What was more, the cleaning up must not be postponed until the morning.

These were times when one did not know, from hour to hour, what might happen next. It was a heart-in-mouth existence for Polly on account of news that might come through from Grangemoor School at any minute. She might hear Jack had finished at Grangemoor. It would be a fitting climax to the feud between him and that prefect who had long borne him a grudge—one final row, in which the prefect, as a prefect, would be upheld by the school authorities, whilst Jack— Oh, to think that her own brother might at any moment be goaded into doing something that would mean expulsion!

Or, again, it might be news of Dave's having a relapse. He had been so terribly ill—poor Dave!—it was called being "a little better" now that he was no longer at death's door.

Still alone in the library, pen idle in her hands, Polly was absent in spirit, as it were, for several minutes. She was at that other school, one of the great Public schools for boys; she was with her brother, helpless victim of that prefect's merciless dislike; she was with her brother's best chum, the boy who was lying almost unconscious in a ward of the san. Brother and brother's chum alike—how well she could visualise them to-night!

Hark! That was some of the girls down at the music-room, now that there was some free time between "prep." and prayers. Madge, at the piano, running over some of the "Merry Morcove" tunes for the rest.

It was a reminder for her, Polly, of how the girls' enthusiasm for the play had been revived this evening. She had been forgiven, on the understanding that there would be no more letting them down. And, of course, they could see no earthly reason why she should let them down any more. Dave—Dave was getting better. Jack—a big, popular chap like Jack! Just as if he couldn't fight his own battle, if there was a battle!

But, ah, they did not know! Even Betty did not know!

"Still!" Polly exclaimed, and shrugged her shoulders. Polly was not one to bemoan her own fate, whatever it might be.

She dipped her pen and began a fresh note, formal and brief:

"Miss Polly Linton begs to apologise to Lady Lundy for what happened a few evenings ago.

"As the blame for it all rests entirely with Miss Polly Linton, she is confident that her ladyship will not allow the Form as a whole to suffer, as it must do if it is made to feel that it has lost that friendly interest which Lady Lundy has always taken in the school."

Polly frowned at the carefully written note. Was it right, or was it only pompous? Anyhow, she couldn't improve upon it. What more could one say than that one accepted all the blame, and that one still hoped—for the Form's own sake—that permission to perform the play at Barncombe Castle would be given?

"Or should I have added something about the loss to a deserving cause if the play isn't performed there? Oh, I can't write any more!" Polly settled. "It must go as it is!"

The bell was ringing the school down to prayers as she sealed and stamped the letter, so it did not seem worth while returning to Study 12.

Into the post-box on the ground floor she shot the note a minute later, thinking: "It'll go in the morning—if only I could go, too!"

But Barncombe was out of bounds to her at present. She was virtually gated, the head-mistress having made that the punishment for the offence given to Lady Lundy. And had any girl at any time, Polly wondered, found the restraint of a "gating" so hard to endure?

No going into Barncombe—at the very time when she stood in desperate need of going into the town! So urgent was her need that she would have felt like breaking bounds, but there was a thought to deter even her impetuous nature. Jack was liable enough to be sent home any day in disgrace from his school. She must be very careful, then, that she did not get sent home from Morcove!

She was standing about, after posting the letter, waiting for all the other girls to come careering downstairs, when Miss Everard appeared.

"Well, Polly, what did it all come to in the end—that babel I heard from the class-room a while ago?"

"Oh, we are going on with the play, that's all, Miss Everard."

"You are? Capital!" commented the Form-mistress. "So, then, supposing I put in a word for you, Polly, with Miss Somerfield? The Form's playwright and all the rest of it—gated! Doesn't seem right, does it? But I don't mean by that that you didn't deserve the gating!"

"I know you don't, Miss Everard," Polly responded, with only the ghost of her ordinary smile. "I deserved it right enough. I suppose."

Miss Everard gave her a dismissing pat that was full of affectionate indulgence.



Suddenly the dressmaker's daughter looked intently at Polly. "Have you any relations at Grangemoor School, miss? A brother perhaps?" she asked. Polly coloured up. Did this girl suspect why she had come? she wondered.

"I'll see what I can do, Polly. Girls—girls, less noise there!"

For they were all coming down now, the juniors not the least boisterous by a long way! Nor were they Miss Everard's own Fourth-Formers who paid most heed to her rebuke. Anything but! Unless Miss Everard was mistaken, she could hear a certain refrain from "Merrie Morcove" being hummed in chorus whilst the juniors lined up in hall.

"Merrie Morcove!"

What an irony it was that Polly, inventor of that catchy title for her great play, should be finding life at Morcove anything but merry just at present!

A Half-Holiday Visit!

BUT next morning there was a relief for Polly in the shape of a reprieve from the rest of the "gating." And what a relief that meant!

Short of news that Dave was definitely on the road to recovery, or that Jack had come off with flying colours after a decisive battle with prefect Rennard, she could have wished for nothing better.

Free to go into Barncombe again!

In other words, free to carry out that strange mission which her bother had asked her to carry out—a mission of inquiry, the result of which

would be certain to decide his fate one way or the other. He had said so in his letter instructing her what to do.

If only she could find out if the tenants of No. 5, Tanner's Lane, Barncombe, were related to Gerald Rennard, it might mean everything to Jack—the difference between his unmerited downfall at Grangemoor School and the deserved dethronement of a tyrant—that detestable prefect, abusing his superior position so abominably where Jack was concerned.

It was after the midday dismissal that Polly had word from Miss Everard that the "gating" had been called off. The Form-mistress kept Polly behind for a minute when the class was trooping away.

Afterwards, Polly raced upstairs like her real madcap self again. She whirled into Study 12 in a way that even Naomer could not have excelled. Only the captain was there.

"Betty—this afternoon!" panted Polly. "It's a halfer, and—and you can let me off games, can't you? Just been told—can go into Barncombe—any of the usual times."

Betty smiled.

"Splendid! And you want to go into Barncombe, do you?"

"Well, yes, I do!"

"Um! For the same reason that made you go off that time when you should have stayed around for rehearsal?"

"Yes, Betty," Polly admitted. "I wish I could explain, but really things are like that."

"Oh, if you don't tell me I know it must simply be because you can't. As to the hockey team—of course, I can find a substitute, Polly. But," with a sly smile, "you won't forget that we are rehearsing after tea?"

"I won't forget, Betty."

"I mean to say—if you do!" was the captain's smiled warning, and Polly laughed. She could laugh again now.

"I know. Even the captain couldn't save me from the rest of the Form! But I will be back in good time for rehearsal, Betty. I make no promise. I simply say that nothing shall prevent me. I won't let it this time—not even—"

Polly would have broken off there, biting a lip, even if Naomer had not danced in, as she did, unwillingly partnured by Paula, and singing at the top of her voice:

"Oh, we are ze girls of Morcove School.
Of Morcove, Merrie Morcove!"

"And what about Lady Lundy?" inquired the dusky one. "Any news yet?"

"Yes," Polly jested. "Before lending the castle for a matinee, her ladyship wishes to know whether you are taking part. If so, it's all off!"

"Bekas why?" demanded Naomer warmly. "You say, queek, Polly!"

"For the perfectly obvious reason," Paula Creel carried on the jest chucklingly, "you are much too obstwepewous—much too—Wow! Owp!"

"Bekas you are much too cheeky, see?" Naomer said, having slammed the amiable duffer into the armchair and started to pummel her. "Hallo! What ze diggings! Ze jolly old leg of ze chair looks as if he is coming off at last!"

Polly blithely stepped to the open window.

"This is a lovely day, girls. Like spring! Surely Dave must be much better to-day!"

"He'll go on all right, Polly, dear," predicted Betty, with youthful optimism, "and be about

again in time to attend our play, even if he hasn't been able to take part in it. Poor Dave! It would be a good idea to put off doing the play until a week later than was intended—only that mustn't mean getting slack with the rehearsals!"

Polly nodded.

"Oh, no! Well, I want to see Tess about the scenery. Oh, and I must see Pam about the costumes!"

Even Tess, touchy as she usually was, was in fine humour to-day. An interview between the schoolgirl playwright and the schoolgirl scene-painter passed off quiet smoothly. As for Pam, "mistress of the wardrobe"—was she ever anything but serene?

"Pam, I wonder," began Polly, flitting in upon her, "would you mind if we gave some of the costume-making and all that to somebody I've heard of in Barncombe? A dressmaker—a widow with a daughter—and I don't fancy much work comes their way."

"By all means, Polly! Just tell me the woman's name, and I can run in to see her, after games, this afternoon. Of course, I'd be back in time for the rehearsal, after tea."

"Oh—er—I'm going to see the woman," blurted out Polly. "You don't mind, Pam?"—hastily.

"I know it's your department really, but—er—"

"You do as you please, Polly!"

"That is nice of you, Pam!"

But, as Polly was saying to herself, where were the girls who were not being particularly nice to her to-day? Ignore Cora Grandways, Diana Forbes and Ursula Wade, and there were none!

After the aggrieved attitude of the Form in general over a most trying period of several days, it was like a change from dark skies to blue. Polly rode away to Barncombe directly after dinner, feeling greatly heartened.

She was a girl who did not easily get "down." But lately troubles had come upon her "not singly, but in whole battalions." Never mind! Morcove for her was "Merrie Morcove" again. Now to see if she could not do such good work, in the next hour or so, that Grangemoor School would once more become as happy a place as ever for Jack!

The larks were singing in the blue, and the flowering gorse was full of trilling linnets. Polly, as she whirled along on her bicycle, was not without a thought of Dave—a hopeful thought. She felt sure that strength must be tiding back to him on a day like this, with sunshine streaming in at the open windows of his ward, and this delicious breeze reaching his fever-wasted cheeks.

So, her spirits mounting, she got to No. 5, Tanner's Lane, and as soon as she knocked it seemed to her that to-day she was in luck. Somebody was at home this time, hurrying forward to the street door.

Next instant that door was opened by a well-grown girl, whose eyes seemed to light up hopefully at sight of Polly. There was a hint of wistful eagerness in her voice as she said:

"Good afternoon, miss. You wish to see my mother?"

"Is Mrs. Marlowe in?"

"I'm sorry, she isn't. She is out working to-day."

"Perhaps I can see you about—about things," suggested Polly, and the other girl nodded eagerly and voiced a respectful: "Will you come in, please?"

It was the tiny front room of the poor little home to which Polly was admitted. Although kept very tidy, it was much more of a work-

room than a cosy parlour. A treadle sewing-machine took up a good deal of room, and one corner was curtained off as a dust-free hanging-place for work in the making. There was no piano, but Polly instantly noticed the brass music-stand such as violinists use. Then she noticed a violin-case, put aside in a corner.

Polly was offered a seat, and she accepted it, aware of Mrs. Marlowe's daughter being in great suspense about the reason for this visit.

"Does it mean work?" was most certainly the girl's anxious thought.

Question and Answer!

"YOU have that card in the window," began Polly, nodding towards it. "Dressmaking.

Well, I— Perhaps you can tell from my clothes I belong to Morcove School."

"Yes, miss. I know it. I have walked out that way once or twice."

"Then you haven't always lived in Barncombe?" smiled Polly.

She wanted it to appear a perfectly casual remark. Jack's letter had emphasised that she must not reveal anxiety to find out what she had to find out, if she could.

"No, miss—not long," answered the dressmaker's daughter, her eyes turning aside. "Mother was never well in London, so we thought we would try to get a living somewhere near the sea. And she really is much stronger now."

"That's good. By the way, I called the other day, but you were both out. I suppose you go out to work at times?"

"Whenever I can. Yes, miss. Perhaps you wonder that I am not in a post of some sort or other, but there are reasons."

"Oh, I could never imagine your idling at home at your mother's expense, if that's what you fear," Polly hastened to say. "Er—we are getting up a play at the school, and, of course, that means a lot of work with stage costumes. So I—er—I wondered if your mother would like to take on some of it?"

"Oh, miss, mother would be delighted! She is such a splendid needlewoman! She ought to get more of it, instead of having to take housework. It isn't that we look down on the daily work, either of us; but what we are trying to do between us is to keep on our little home, and—"

"I can quite understand," nodded Polly. "That means you have to refuse posts that might be quite good ones! Perhaps you have only each other now?"

The dressmaker's daughter did not answer this question.

"There are special reasons—why we feel we must struggle along like this," she murmured vaguely. "And if only we can hold out until the summer—"

"That's it!" nodded Polly encouragingly. "The holiday season! Barncombe gets its fair share of visitors, you'll find. Well, then, your mother would help with the stage costumes?"

"Miss, she would be ever so glad!"

"You must tell me the best time to find her in," Polly rattled on genially, "and I'll be along again, bringing another girl—the one who is our official costume designer and all that. I didn't get her to come to-day as—well, I thought I would just inquire myself first. But your mother will have Pam Willoughby to talk things over with. One of the nicest girls in our Form—Pam Willoughby. She lives at Swanlake. You may have heard of her people?"

"Swanlake, miss?"

"I can tell you have only been in the district a very little while!" laughed Polly. "Swanlake—not far from Grangemoor. You must have heard of Grangemoor? There's a big school there—a boy's school."

Was she mistaken, or had the dressmaker's daughter become slightly agitated at the mention of Grangemoor School?

"Yes, miss, I know there is a great Public school for boys at Grangemoor," came the steady remark at last. "We have never been that way, mother and I."

Polly stood up as if ready to go, but at heart she was determined to feel her way further with this girl—carefully, in case some rashly-uttered word should betray her longing to find out what might be a jealously-guarded secret—that something Jack had said might mean everything to him!

Suddenly the dressmaker's daughter looked Polly straight in the face.

"Have you any relations at Grangemoor, miss? A brother, perhaps?"

For the life of her Polly could not help colouring up. She could no more voice an untruthful "No" to the question that had been fired at her than she could retort: "Have you?" Oh, dash! she fumed mentally; here was a nice thing! It looked as if already this girl had suddenly suspected just what it would be fatal for her to find out—that somebody at Grangemoor had asked her, Polly, to come here and try to probe a secret.

"You will excuse me, miss, I hope," faltered the dressmaker's daughter after a great pause. "I should not have been so—so inquisitive. It was rude of me."

"Not at all," Polly could smile, in great relief. "As a matter of fact, my school—er—has very little to do with Grangemoor as a rule. They're too far apart, really, for anything like—"

"Yes, Grangemoor is a long ride from here," exclaimed the other girl, and she seemed to say it thankfully. "Yet," with fresh uneasiness, "boys from Grangemoor come into Barncombe!"

"Not often," said Polly, with apparent carelessness. "They are only allowed so far in a party, I fancy, and they have to have a prefect with them, which rather annoys them sometimes, I expect. Of course, it depends upon the prefect. Some are all right, no doubt."

She nearly, in her impetuous way, added: "I know one who isn't—Gerald Rennard!"

"It must be a great shame when the boys get a harsh prefect over them," murmured the dressmaker's daughter reflectively.

Polly laughed.

"He gets short shrift when he's found out, that's one blessing! And the sooner the better, don't you think? Well, then—er—by the way, what's your full name? I'd like to have it." Polly again put a check upon her tongue.

"Violet Marlowe, miss."

"Violet! How nice! Well—er—I shall see you again. Is it you who plays the fiddle?"

"I like to keep on with my music, miss—yes."

They were passing out to the street door.

"Mother will be in after five every day next week," said Violet Marlowe, unlatching the door. "I will tell her that you called, of course. And as for the dressmaking—you may be sure that she will take the greatest pains."

"Right-ho! Then that's that!"

But it wasn't, Polly realised only too well, what she had come to find out. What had she found out? Nothing except that Violet Marlowe seemed to have seemed glad that Grangemoor School was

as far off as it was, and that casual allusion to prefects had left her reflective. Not so bad for a beginning, perhaps; but oh, if only one could have found out more!

Then, as she wheeled her bicycle towards High Street, something had a reviving effect upon Polly's spirits again. Perhaps it was the warm sunshine.

"Just as if I could have expected to do better than I have!" she said to herself. "It is something to have got acquainted with Violet Marlowe—and to be sure of further meetings. It's a good idea getting the mother to make some of the stage costumes. They need the money, one can tell."

The two of them, struggling along like that, in one of Barncombe's mean by-streets, thankful for any work that came their way; and yet—related to Gerald Rennard? Strange, if that really was the case! But was it? At the next meeting she must try to find out. It had simply got to be found out, for Jack had said that, strange as it might seem, to be able to prove the existence of a relationship would mean an end to all his troubles.

"To-morrow—no, I can't see Violet again to-morrow," Polly mused as she mounted her machine in the sunny High Street. "Sunday. But why shouldn't Pam and I, after tea on Monday, bike in and—"

As abruptly as that her thoughts broke off, whilst her machine gave a sudden wobble. A huge car was going slowly by, and it was the cause of Polly's nearly falling off her machine to find that the lady riding in the motor was leaning towards a window to give her a smiling nod. Lady Lundy!

"Then I'm forgiven! Oh, hooray! Hurrah!" Polly was inwardly cheering next moment. "That's another bit of luck to-day! Oh, things are looking up altogether! I shall be hearing from her, to say we can give the play at the castle after all!"

What with her almost tearful joy making the sunny High Street go all swimmy to her eyes, and the number of people and vehicles in the street, Polly could not get along fast until she was clear of the town.

On the open road again, however, how she whirled along! Study 12's madcap, the composer of "Merrie Morcove," riding home to the school at top speed to be in time to see the finish of the match, have an early tea, and after that—a rehearsal!

Bad News!

THE game was in its second half when Polly reached the school's playing-field.

Unobtrusively she joined the onlookers, watching her Form's team battling hard against the Fifth. It was keen rivalry, without the faintest trace of bad feeling even by the side that was one goal down.

Polly had looked on for a couple of minutes before anything came of the breathless, rushing conflict. Then a goal was scored—again by the juniors. They were now two up, which meant that the match was certainly theirs. Coming on top of Polly's own personal happiness, this grand bit of work by her Form-mates was just too much for her to appreciate silently.

"Goal!" she vociferated deliriously, and then Betty and others, favoured with a moment's breathing space, looked her way.

"Polly—back already! Bravo, Polly!" she heard them singing out.

The white ball came into play again; but Polly had a sudden brainwave, and scampered to the schoolhouse, to fly upstairs and get the tea-things out in Study 12.

She knew that it would be nice for tea to be on the table when Betty came in from the field, bringing others with her. Besides, the sooner tea was over, the sooner they could see about that rehearsal.

Polly was singing to herself as she rattled out the crockery and jingled spoons into saucers. That was how she felt now—able to hum or sing bits from "Merrie Morcove" as blithely as other girls had been doing, on and off, all day. Why not? That smile from Lady Lundy, coming after a promising first meeting with Violet Marlowe, was reason enough for cheerfulness.

Yes; things were looking up. Rome was not built in a day. Jack had said that she must find out what he wanted to know concerning the Marlowes as soon as possible; at the same time, he had impressed upon her the need for great tact. So she could not expect to do too much all at once.

Presently she went to the window, her table laying finished. The match was over, and she could see all the girls making for the schoolhouse. The afternoon was still as sunny as ever, with a genial breeze to make it seem like spring.

The schoolhouse knew again the old after-games riot made by girls coming up to their studies and to tea. Study doors slammed; laughter and cries of "See you after tea!" were in the air. Into Study 12 came Betty, flushed and eyes a-sparkle, Naomer and others flocking behind.

"You didn't get another goal after the one I saw?" Polly said, in a too-good-to-be-true tone.

"We did!" cried Betty, shyly her hockey stick into a corner. "Four goals to their one!"

"We beat 'em to a jolly old frazzle!" yelled Naomer. "Bekas—all togegger:

"We are zo girls of Morcove School,
Of Morcove, jolly old Morcove!"

"I don't allow any variation of my copyright!" said Polly severely. "As to the match, it only shows what you can do when you don't have me!"

"Yes, wather! I mean," Paula hastily amended the absent-minded remark. "The twuth is, Polly, deah, we were all in gveat form. The friendly feeling at pwsent pveailing, what? The fwee-dom frowm stwife, bai Jove—the—Ow, wowp!"

"Sorry, but you should keep your feet out of ze way," said Naomer. "Polly, what about Lady Lundy? Any news?"

"Yes, Polly?" clamoured others.

Polly beamed.

"She passed me in her car in the High Street. Such a sweet smile! So I suppose it will be all right, girls."

"Gorjus! Bekas, ze best of performing at ze Castle, they always give you such jolly good refreshments."

Someone looked in at the open doorway. It was Elsie Ashby.

"Is Polly there? Good! You are going to keep an eye on her, Betty. Remember, there's the rehearsal presently!"

Whereupon Polly tipped Paula out of the arm-chair and plumped into it herself.

"Here I am—here I stay!" she announced. "My compliments to all the others, Elsie, and I shall be in the music-room at four-fifteen, prompt."

"Glad to hear it," jested back Elsie, and she scampered away.

"Tea-eh!" yelled Naomer, drawing up her own chair to the attractive table.

They gathered round, and Betty's pouring out for all was soon done. It may have been rather a rushed tea, on account of the coming rehearsal, but it was none the less substantial.

Afterwards, willing hands made light work of the clearing away, and then—never mind whether other girls were already going down to the music-room. Betty & Co. made for it in lively fashion.

By being before the appointed time, they thus escaped the attentions of sundry members of the Fifth Form, who materialised on a staircase landing just as the rest of the rehearsalists were coming down.

The Fifth Form would never have owned to feeling a little sore over that terrible whacking on the games field, but the juniors felt sure that it had something to do with this revived scoffing.

"This way to the circus," said one Fifth-Former.

"Hurry up! You'll be late!" said another.

"Polly's really there this time!"

"Is it a rehearsal?" asked a third teaser. "If so, we'll go for a walk. Come away, girls! My nerves won't bear it."

"Enter chorus—exit audience!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

To all of which, and much else in the same strain, the juniors showed a bland indifference, doubtless very annoying to the Fifth.

"Take your places, please! Opening chorus!" Polly was loudly requesting presently, and the mob sorted itself out accordingly.

Madge was at the piano, serious enough to be an object of amusement to the more mischievous members of the chorus. Polly held a blackboard pointer to serve as conductor's baton. She raised it—then lowered it, glaring at Naomer.

"You'll go to the back, Naomer! Keep your feet still for once!"

The dusky one came strictly to attention, head up, eyes to the front, breath held behind compressed lips. In this state she was fast swelling to bursting-point when Polly began to beat time. One—two!

Flop! All Madge's manuscript music unluckily fell off the piano at this moment.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ugh!" Polly stamped, and she ran a hand through her hair. "And I suppose that's what it will be when Lady Lundy is here! Now then—now! One—two—three!" she struck up.

But there was another hitch. At the very instant when the opening "Oh!" of the curtain-raising chorus was due, the music-room door opened, and in walked Jack Linton!

Polly herself might have been a few seconds behind all the other girls in recognising who the intruder was, for her back was to the doorway. But there was an instantaneous chorus of "Jack! It's Jack Linton!"

Flashing round, she almost dropped the baton, so staggered did she feel.

"Hooray! It's your brother, Polly!" she was dinned at. "Coming to take part after all!"

"Gorjus!" shrieked Naomer, breaking ranks to prance across to Jack. "Hip, pip! Bekas—"

"Hallo, girls!" Jack managed to make himself heard genially. "Miss Everard said I would find you just starting a rehearsal. Well, Polly!"

"Jack!" she gasped as if she could hardly believe it was he. "But—but—"

"Bit of a surprise, eh?" he chuckled. But was it a quite natural chuckle?

Polly felt that it was not. She scrutinised his face, and there came the further disquieting feeling that the smile was a forced one.

"Does it really mean, Jack, that you are able to take part in the play after all?" Betty asked eagerly.

"What does it mean, Jack?" panted Polly. "You—you haven't—"

Her look completed the question: "Broken bounds again?"

"Er—I'm afraid I'm not stopping," he informed them all gravely. "Only wish I could! But—er—Polly, I must see you at once if—the girls can excuse you? I've got sad news for you!"

Polly turned pale. There were serious looks everywhere. In a second she was walking outside with him.

But Jack was already going out with Polly, and the inquiry went unanswered. This rendered it a suddenly quiet room which brother and sister



Polly looked anxiously at her brother. "Oh, Jack, you don't mean—"

"I mean I've got a fortnight more at Grangemoor, that's all!" Jack said, between clenched teeth.

quitted together, to face each other outside the closed door.

"How is Dave?" asked Polly tensely.

"Well, Polly—well," he hesitated and fumbled the cap he held, "it's on account of Dave that I—that they've sent me over in a car."

"Oh!" She drew back a step. "A—a relapse?" Her brother nodded.

"He's pretty bad, Polly. He took a sort of—sort of sinking turn this morning. Funny," Jack gulped, "the only word they've had from him since then was my name and yours. Seemed to want us."

Polly turned away, putting a hand up to her white face. Then she turned to Jack again, with inquiring eyes. He resumed:

"They let me out of morning school to go and see him, but he didn't know me then. Now they've sent me in a car to fetch you. His guardian seemed to think you ought to come. Polly—Polly, old girl, I—I'm sorry. You know Dave, the pal he's been. I only wish that I, not he, was lying there!"

"Not expected to live?" she breathed.

"Not expected to live," her brother answered huskily.

Called Away!

A GAIN, for one brief instant, Polly stood turned away, a hand masking her blanched face.

Then, with a visible effort, she pulled herself together and looked at Jack, who was blinking queerly at nothing in particular.

"Right! I'll come," she said quietly. "The car's waiting?"

He nodded.

"And it's all right. Miss Everard has gone to tell Miss Somerfield. You may have to stay the night. But the Head's wife will see to that, Polly. You don't need to stay to pack anything."

"Oh, no! Just a moment." And Polly, opening the music-room door, called: "Betty, can you come a second?"

Then Betty came out, and only to see the brother and sister looking so upset was enough for her.

"Oh, the poor boy!" she said, as if she had been told all. "How dreadful!"

"Betty, I've got to go over to Grangemoor. Fancy, he wanted me, with Jack," Polly said humbly. "Well, we always have been such chums. About the rehearsal—"

"Oh, you don't want to bother about that, dear. We shall call it off, of course."

"Yes. But it seems as if— Oh, never mind! Let me get away. Bye, Betty! Come on, Jack!"

And as promptly as that brother and sister went downstairs, whilst Betty returned to the music-room, to break the appalling news.

It seemed to Polly that she was coming out of a stunned state at last, to find herself in the car with her brother. Already they were upon the cross-country road, and the motor was almost bounding over the rough surface. Now and then Polly was bumped so violently, in spite of the luxurious upholstery, that she thought her head would go through the roof.

They flew along, for the chauffeur, a veteran at his job, knew what a life-or-death race this was. The same miles of moorland country which had cost Polly a panting effort with the cycle on other occasions were left behind in a few minutes.

She asked her brother for more details, and he gave them, his voice having a little crack in it

now and then such as comes of long-pent-up emotion. The doctors had thought that Dave was really doing better. They had been rejoicing that his case had been pulled through without any need for an operation after all. Then, this morning, there had been this alarming relapse.

Polly said nothing as her brother lapsed into silence. On and on romped the car. Tr-r-rump, trump! from the warning horn at cross-ways on the lonely moor; then—whurr! on again as fast as ever. But as to whether they would be in time—ah, who could say!

No tears trickled down Polly's cheeks, but in her heart she was weeping for the poor lad, her brother's staunch chum ever, dear to all of them as a family, endeared to her by so much that quiet loyalty had meant at times. Their Dave—quiet, shy Dave—straight as a die, one to rely upon when more assertive friends were failing utterly—and they were going to lose him!

Presently she turned to Jack.

"What about you, Jack, dear?"

"Oh, never mind about me, Polly."

"But," she persisted gently, "I want to know. Is Rennard as much down on you as ever? Your House-master?"

"Don't ask me to talk about Mr. Lethbury! He may be all right, but he can't see through Rennard. None of them can."

"Anyway, things are no worse than they were, Jack?"

He did not answer, and so Polly could only guess that things really were worse.

"Is there nothing—nothing you can say, Jack, that could be at all cheering?" she exclaimed, in an anguished tone. "And only an hour or so ago I was feeling so happy, feeling that all was going to come right soon. I called at Tanner's Lane this afternoon. I had my first talk with one of the Marlowes—with Violet, the daughter."

Jack roused out of black dejection.

"Did you find out, Polly, for certain?"

"Nothing for certain," she sighed. "How could I, at the first interview, and when you had implored me to be careful not to muffle the whole thing at the start?"

"I know," he nodded. "Of course you couldn't. It's something if you have got acquainted with them without raising suspicion."

"Well, I think I did do that," she murmured. "And I shall be seeing them again on Monday—that is, I suppose I shall. Oh, I shall find out what you want to know if only I can have sufficient time, Jack!"

"I can tell you exactly how much time there is," he said grimly. "A fortnight."

His sister turned in her seat, to eye him in a startled, horrified way.

"Jack! Oh, you don't mean—"

"I've got a fortnight more at Grangemoor—that's all," he said through clenched teeth. "I dare say I should have been sent home before this if it hadn't been for Dave's illness."

"Jack! It is really as serious as that?" she gasped.

"I didn't want you to know—not with all this worry and grief on account of Dave; but what's the use of letting you go on to Grangemoor in ignorance? You'll soon be told there. I know one chap, anyway, who will just delight in telling you, and that's Gerald Rennard. The unspcakable cad!" Jack added, in a raging way. "The day I go—" And he clenched his fists.

Polly put a hand soothingly to her brother's shoulder, but for a full minute she could say nothing. There was another blare on the motor-

horn, and then the car drew out warily on to a better road, although it was not a main highway. The name "Swanlake" was on one pointing arm of a sign-post.

"We've come along at a lick!" Jack commented, peering out. "Seen be there now, Polly."

"Yes. But, Jack, why—why has it come to your being sent home in a fortnight's time?"

He passed a hand through his ruffled hair.

"Because I haven't the means of proving my case against Rennard—that he's a cad, not fit to be a prefect! Because I'm a bad hand at taking blows sitting down, Polly."

"And he has been hitting at you, has he?"

"All the time. You know the sort of hitting—always with a fair excuse to offer. I was up before Lethbury for striking Rennard. Well, the brute got me roused, so that I saw red. Leth-

"Pam's parents, I understand, came over to Grangemoor to see Dave the other afternoon," Jack remarked huskily. "They didn't see me, of course; I was in school. Polly, old girl, how do you feel now?"

"I'm all right, Jack."

"You don't look it. As for me, I keep on feeling as if I must make a silly ass of myself over Dave. But I can't help it, Polly."

He added wretchedly:

"You know, it's pretty clear now that Dave was never as strong as we thought him. That accounts for his being always so quiet, eh? Must have felt tired often without saying anything."

"I don't know," sighed Polly. "Life's funny."

"If he'd been well at this time, he'd have been getting over to Barncombe to do what's fallen to you to do, Polly. I know he would have,"



"Now, Linton, you might have the decency not to give trouble while poor Dave Lawdor is ill," said the prefect. Polly flashed round upon him fiercely. "You are a fine one to talk about 'poor' Dave!" she blazed out.

bury, thinking all the world of Rennard as a pre., says I must apologise."

"And you wouldn't?"

"See me apologising to Rennard! So then Lethbury takes me to the Head. Lecture about how discipline must be preserved and all that guff. Quite all right if Rennard were fit to be a pre. Well, there is still just a chance, I suppose; but it all depends on you, Polly. I'm sorry it should have come upon you like this," Jack added, his voice husky. "If I haven't handed in a written apology, to be read before the whole school, by this day fortnight home I go. And I am just not going to apologise."

"No, Jack, don't you!" said Polly. She put a hand into his. "You just leave it to me."

The talk lapsed again. Now the speeding car was running past the great private park of Swanlake.

gulped Jack. "He was that sort of chap—a pall Well, here we are!"

The car was turning in at the main entrance to Grangemoor School.

Peering out, Polly noticed instantly that no games were being played, although the rolled grass could not have looked more inviting, all shiny in the mellow sunshine. Plenty of boys were to be seen, but they were only standing or walking about in subdued groups.

With a swish of its fat tyres, the car swung from the main drive on to a gravelled stretch leading to the isolated "san." It pulled up quietly, and Jack jumped out to help his sister alight.

No one was there to receive them. They went in by the grey stone porch and hushed their mounting steps. Polly knew that the place was always as silent as this, but now it was like the silence of a sepulchre.

Suddenly they encountered a tall, grave gentleman coming down. He stopped to speak. It was Dave's lawyer guardian. He looked worn out with so much watching at the bedside.

"Ah, Miss Polly," he greeted her, inclining his grey head with an old-time courtesy, "how are you, my dear?"

"How is he now?" she whispered. "We are not too late—Jack and I?"

"No." And her heart went on beating again. "But he is very, very far gone now, poor boy. It is the saddest thing I have ever known. If I lose him—" The old gentleman took out a handkerchief and blew his nose. "There has not been much sentiment in my life, young people. I am reckoned to be a stern old fellow, I know, but—"

"I may go on up to the ward with my brother —may I?" Polly faltered. "I can be brave."

"Ah, my dear, it would be no use! He would not know you," was the quavered answer. "It would only distress you. But I am very glad to know that you are here—available at any moment. I will frankly confess," the guardian smiled bravely, "I have felt a little jealous of all you Lintons at times. He seemed to feel he was one of you."

"I may see him?" pleaded Polly. "Now?"

But again there was a firm shake of the head.

"Your sister had better report to the head-mistress's wife, perhaps?" the lawyer suggested to Jack. "You have been very quick, fetching your sister from Morcove, and I am none the less grateful, my boy, although her immediate presence is not advisable, after all. In a little while, perhaps—we must hope—"

"Yes, sir," said Jack dully. "Polly, come away now!"

"But I want to see him! Oh, please! All right." She put a check upon herself next moment, and they went down behind the guardian, following him into the open air. He had only come down to take a turn upon the grass, walking to and fro, hands clasped behind him.

Smiled upon their way by him, brother and sister drifted towards Head's house.

The thrushes were singing lustily in the old elms.

"It doesn't seem possible," Polly, exclaimed, dully taking in the bright scene.

"One of the best," said Jack. "Never another like him. Oh, I can't stand it! I shall—"

"H'sh! Jack, somehow I feel that he will live. If he— Oh, but he won't! I don't know what—we should do!"

She cried a little suddenly, then pulled herself together again.

"And now," muttered Jack a minute later, "here's that Rennard!"

It may have been out of kindly consideration that so many of Jack's schoolfellows, loitering about in an aimless manner, had kept aloof from him and his sister, but it seemed to Polly as if, even at such a time as this, her brother was being avoided. Cruel that the only fellow to approach should be this hateful prefect!

"Ah, so you've got back, Linton! How do?" Rennard smiled at Polly, who gave him a scathing look. "You're to stay the night, if necessary, in Head's house. Perhaps you know?"

She did not answer, but the silent scorn could not banish his secure, supercilious look.

"Where are you going, Linton?"

"Mo? I'm seeing my sister to Head's house, of course."

"Well, don't be long. No hanging about over there. That was never intended. Have the decency not to give trouble whilst poor Dave Lawder is—"

Polly, who had put her back to the prefect, flashed round with a pent-up "Oh!"

"You're a fine one to talk about 'poor Dave'!" she blazed out.

"Why?" he retorted blandly. "You don't suppose I'm not sorry? I can be sorry enough for Dave Lawder, Miss Pert; but as for this brother of yours—hardly!"

"Come away, Jack!" his sister implored frantically, for Jack had taken a stride and was standing before the tall prefect, breathing hard.

"Ah, but can you wonder, Polly?" was Jack's raging murmur as they moved on together, "that I've so let myself go at times? I've only got that fortnight now, and then—finish!"

She dropped a hand caressing down his sleeve.

"A fortnight, Jack. I should be able to manage it in the time. Oh, I am sure I will be able to— to save you after all by finding out in time! If only I can go on. I mean," she added, speaking more to herself than to him, "if only Dave will live!"

Late that evening, at Morcove School, Miss Somerfield was on the phone again with the wife of Grangemoor's headmaster.

Aware of the general anxiety in her own school, Miss Somerfield was going to make an announcement at the final muster of the day. But there were some girls who were told before then.

"I have just been to Miss Somerfield to ask," was Betty's remark as she came back to a very crowded Study 12. "Polly won't be back tonight."

Nobody voiced any comment on this. Thronged though the study was, there had been very little talk. Now Betty's chums let silence show how gravely her next utterance was being awaited.

"As for Dave," the Form captain added sighingly—"poor Dave Lawder! I am afraid some of us will never see him again, girls! He is not expected to last the night."

And still the others remained mute. Theirs was a sadness now far too deep for words. Paula Creel gave a sudden sob, and hastily fumbled for her handkerchief.

"Yes, Well," Pam said at last, very softly, "in that case, of course, we shall cancel the play."

Others nodded.

"We couldn't do anything else now," murmured the Form captain sadly. "In any case, I don't see how it could be carried on. We are lost without Polly."

"We are," agreed Madge, with quiet emphasis.

"And Polly," added Betty, "if this terrible thing does happen, will be heartbroken. She will be fit for nothing for weeks."

The Form captain said it, knowing it to be the inevitable, but not knowing that only two short weeks were left to Polly in which to right her brother and save him from expulsion—if only Fate would let her!

(END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.)

Things indeed look black for the girl who is usually the merry madcap of the Form. Never has Polly Linton experienced such worry and such sorrow at one and the same time. What is to happen now? You must read next week's great long complete Morcove tale, "WHAT MORE COULD POLLY DO?" Make sure of securing your next copy of SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN by ordering it now.